



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: MOUSE

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE MOUSE?

- It's *achbar* (עכבר).
- The English word “mouse” comes from a Sanskrit word meaning “thief.”
- Why might that be a good description for mice?

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE MOUSE IS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE? (1 Samuel 6:4, 5, 11)

- The Ark of the Lord had been captured by the Philistines but they weren't sure what to do with it because, apparently, it had caused plagues among them.
- So they called their priests and asked them, What shall we do with the Ark of the Lord?
- Their priests said, If you send the Ark back, don't send it empty but include an offering—then you will be cured of the plague.
- And they said, What offering shall we send back to the God of Israel?
- And their priests said, Make golden images of the swelling of your lymph glands and images of the *mice* that bring the plagues, and you will honor the God of Israel. Perhaps then the God of Israel will remove the plagues.
- So they made a cart and hitched two cows to it, and sent the Ark of the Lord and the golden objects they had made back to God as an offering.
- The cows went straight to Beth-shemesh.
- The people were harvesting wheat and rejoiced when they saw the Ark.
- They split the wood from the cart, made a fire, and sacrificed the cows as an offering to the Lord.
- The Levites took the Ark of the Lord and the box with the golden objects and put them on a huge stone where they made the sacrifice to God.
- The lords of the Philistines had followed the cart and seen all this and returned to their place.
- The Bible doesn't say, but we can probably assume safely that the plagues ended with the return of the Ark of the Lord.

DO MICE THREATEN US IN ANY WAY?

- Because of their small size, we tend to think of them at best as “cute” and at worst as a “nuisance.”
- But the Bible tells us that, in large numbers, mice can seriously damage or destroy crops of stored foods like grain. (1 Samuel 10:10)
- Mice and the fleas they carry spread disease.

- And since the mouse is not a kosher animal, there are cases where the rabbis decided that big containers of beer and vinegar had to be thrown away because mice got into them.

IT'S TIME FOR THE MOUSE QUIZ!

- The mouse is a “first-cousin” to what other animal? (rat)
- How often does a female mouse give birth and how many young does she have? (Every 20 to 30 days she has four to seven young at a time.)
- Where do most mice in the United States live? (In houses, garages, and barns.)
- How long is the average house mouse, including its tail? (6.5 inches)
- What do mice eat? (Almost anything we do.)
- Why does a mouse have whiskers (like a cat!)? (To help feel its way in the dark.)
- Can a mouse bite hurt you? (Yes! They have strong, sharp front teeth.)

THERE IS A STORY ABOUT A MOUSE WHO LEARNED A VERY VALUABLE LESSON.

- This story was told by a famous Rabbi (the Kobriner) when he was teaching about one of the Psalms (10:10) that says, “He crouches, he bows down, and the helpless fall into his mighty claws.”
- A mother mouse sent out her son to search for food, but warned him to be careful of the enemy.
- The mouse met up with a rooster and ran home terrified.
- He described the rooster as a stuck-up being with a high, kingly red comb on its head.
- “He is no enemy of ours,” cried his mother, and she sent her son out again to look for food.
- This time he met a turkey and was even more terrified.
- “He is also not our enemy,” said his mother when he got home.
- And she added: “Our enemy keeps his head down like a very humble person. He is smooth and speaks softly, and he looks friendly and seems to be very kind—but if you meet him, beware!”
- What animal do you think the mouse’s mother was describing?
- What do you think we can learn from this story?



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